



California Postsecondary Education Commission

770 L Street, Suite 1160 • Sacramento, California 95814

www.cpec.ca.gov • (916) 445-1000

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact

Sherri Orland

sorland@cpec.ca.gov • (916) 445-1000

Commission Says State Must Increase its Responsibility to Fund Higher Education: Calls for Five Year Freeze on Student Fees

SACRAMENTO — March 30, 2006 — At its March 28-29 meeting, the California Postsecondary Education Commission called for a five year moratorium on new fees for students attending California's public colleges and universities.

In taking the action, Commission Chair Howard Welinsky said, "We are sending a signal that the State must honor its commitment to the Master Plan for Higher Education and to the people of California, and dedicate a greater proportion of its State General Fund to our public colleges and universities. For far too long, increases in student fees have been the answer whenever the State finds itself in financial trouble. We have reached the point that the cost of attendance at the University and State University is beyond the grasp of many lower and middle income families."

The Commission began by looking at its historic position on student fees that calls for "gradual, moderate, and predictable" increases over time. It concluded that California had entered a "new era" where the overall costs of attending college, of which fees are only a part, is in danger of becoming a major barrier to access and opportunity for Californians.

In making its decision to recommend a freeze on student fees for the next five years, the Commission considered both the steep rise in student charges and the decline in State General Fund support for higher education. It also noted a rapid rise in the level of debt incurred by students and their families, and the inability of state and federal grant programs to keep pace with escalating costs.

Commission Executive Director Murray Haberman noted, "The Commission recommended moving more toward an affordability policy, rather than reaffirming its policy on student fees. It is a simple acknowledgement of the reality of financing a college education in today's environment. The state cannot afford to find itself in the position where the perceived value of higher education is not worth the fiscal pain necessary to obtain it."

The Commission plans to actively seek additional state support from the Governor and the Legislature and involve representatives of student groups, the segments of higher education, and other policy makers in the crafting of a new approach to financing higher education in California.

The Commission adopted a set of principles to help guide the development of an affordability policy. It can be accessed on the Commission's web site at www.cpec.ca.gov/CompleteReports/2006Reports/OP06-03.pdf.

In other actions, the Commission approved a new educational center for the town of Needles. This action was related to the Commission's efforts to develop policies for providing better educational services to rural and remote areas of the state.

Haberman observed that, "From what we have seen, educators and officials at the local level have shown tremendous initiative and creativity in providing services to rural areas despite barriers such as state funding formulas, inadequate transportation and infrastructure, and lack of economies of scale. However, the challenges facing Californians in rural areas are very real and demand that the Commission continue to work with our colleagues in the community colleges and other segments in finding innovative and creative ways to finance and deliver postsecondary education to these communities."

The California Postsecondary Education Commission advises the Governor and the Legislature on higher education policy and fiscal issues. The Commission's primary focus is to ensure that the state's educational resources are used effectively to provide Californians with postsecondary education opportunities.

####